United Nations A/CN.10/PV.255

General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Comm
255th meeting
Thursday, 17 April 2003, 4 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Maiolini ..... (Italy)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Report of the Disarmament Commission to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session

The Chairman: We will start the final meeting of the 2003 substantive session with the adoption of reports of the subsidiary bodies on the two substantive agenda items, as well as consideration and adoption, under agenda item 6, of the draft report of the Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2003/CRP.2 to 4. Those documents have been circulated in English only, as agreed yesterday.

In accordance with our agreed working timetable, we will first consider and adopt the report of the Commission and thereafter hear concluding statements by delegations.

To start the process of the consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I should like to call on the Chairman of each Working Group to introduce the report of that Group.

As there are no comments, I shall give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Mr. Alaa Issa, Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", to introduce the report of the Working Group as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.3.

Mr. Issa (Egypt), Chairman of Working Group I: Working Group I, which dealt with the item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", held 12 meetings in the period between 2 and 17 April 2003. A great deal of work was conducted during that period, both in formal meetings and in informal consultations. On the first day, we had before us document A/CN.10/2003/WG.I/WP.1. As a result of proposals and statements by member States during the first two meetings, there was a consensus that the document should be abbreviated. That was done, and at the third meeting a revised document was presented, in A/CN.10/2003/WG.I/WP.1/Rev.1.

During the course of deliberations in the Working Group, eight meetings were devoted to general discussions, during which comments, ideas and proposals regarding the working paper were presented by all delegations. Based on those submissions, the Chairman prepared a number of conference room papers — five in all — which were distributed daily and were based on the outcome of the discussions of the previous day.

Furthermore, during the past two days — 15 and 16 April — the Chairman presented two papers, each entitled "Chairman's proposal". The first contained sections 1 to 3; the second, which was submitted yesterday, 16 April, contained sections 1 to 4, as well as an annex. Unfortunately, the Group was not able to achieve consensus on the Chairman's proposal. It is therefore presented as an annex to the report of Working Group I.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the efforts that you have made and the assistance that you have given me, as Chairman of the Working Group,

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over the past three weeks, as well as for your tireless work in consulting with delegations in an attempt to assist us all to try to achieve consensus. I would like to thank Ms. Cheryl Stoute of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, as well as Ms. Mika Murakami and Mr. Randy Rydell, for their devotion and hard work. I would like in particular to thank the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, without whom the work of Working Group I could not have progressed to the stage we reached yesterday, when I believe we were very close to consensus.

The reality, however, is that we could not achieve consensus. Despite that fact, I can only thank delegations, all of which contributed much in terms of substance and in terms of how to proceed. It was a very useful three weeks. I hope that the experience was as useful and pleasant for them as it was for me. I am grateful to them and to you, Mr. Chairman. I hope that the Disarmament Commission will be able to make further progress on the issue of nuclear disarmament at its future sessions.

The Chairman: We greatly appreciate the efforts and the contribution of the Chairman of Working Group I. I thank him for his kind words addressed to the Chairman, the Secretariat and the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

As there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.3.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: I would now like to move on to the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.4.

I give the floor to Mr. Santiago Mourão of Brazil, Chairman of Working Group II, to introduce the report of that Working Group.

Mr. Mourão (Brazil), Chairman of Working Group II: I should like first of all to say that I was very honoured to be elected Chairman of the Working Group. I think that we have worked in a very constructive manner, although we were unable, at the end of this three-year exercise cycle, to reach a consensus on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

Working Group II held 12 meetings, between 2 and 17 April. At the very beginning of that period the Chairman presented a document that was put together by his predecessor, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic — a document that reflected the stage that had been reached after three years of discussions, negotiations and informal consultations with many delegations. That was the starting point for our work. Since the document was presented to everybody, the Chairman came up with four revised documents that reflected the advances that we made during the discussions and the good and very objective proposals made by delegations from the floor. They also reflected the immense amount of work done outside this Room in informal consultations in the most varied formats imaginable — bilateral, plurilateral and so forth. That, of course, revitalized our faith in this multilateral exercise.

At the end of our meeting today, delegations were unable to reach a consensus on the fourth revision of the working paper, presented by the Chairman this morning. That paper reflected the stage of our discussions at the 11th meeting, which was held yesterday. As that paper did not enjoy consensus, it appears as an annex to the report of Working Group II, which was adopted this morning and which has been distributed to all delegations.

I should like very particularly to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your support for me and for your tireless efforts to build a consensus among delegations. I should also like to thank very specifically Mr. Nazir Kamal, Mr. Shiyun Sang, Mr. Tam Chung and other members of the Secretariat who have worked tirelessly with me into the late hours of the night to put together and distribute to delegations the various revised versions on time. In addition, I thank the translators and all the other people who have helped us in our work. Finally, I wish to thank you once again, Mr. Chairman, for your support.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Brazil, Chairman of Working Group II, for his kind words, but also, and in particular, for his conduct and his efforts during our session. I am a witness to those efforts, because I was always nearby when he was consulting. I wish him every success; he is a brilliant young diplomat.

Does any delegation wish to comment on the report of Working Group II?

Mr. Najafi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should like to congratulate the Chairmen of both Working Groups for their hard work.

With regard to paragraph 5 of the report of Working Group II, I recall that there was a proposal to amend it. I believe that the paragraph, as it stands, needs an addition; perhaps, because it was proposed by our colleague from the United Kingdom, that representative could help us. When we say "the Working Group considered, but was unable to reach consensus", it seems that something else is needed: considered what? Perhaps we could say, "the Working Group considered the latest version of the Chairman's paper but was unable to reach consensus on it". That is just a proposal; I am flexible.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Iran. I think we can accept his proposal, provided that the United Kingdom delegation approves, since — as we have said in the past — that delegation is the ultimate reference on the English language.

In the absence of any further comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.4.

The report was adopted.

The Chairman: Now that we have adopted the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I should like to thank the Chairmen of the two Working Groups for their dedication. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their effective leadership in guiding the deliberations of the Working Groups on two very complex issues.

We shall now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.2. I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Mehieddine El Kadiri of Morocco, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. El Kadiri (Morocco), Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission: It is my honour and distinct pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission at its 2003 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.2. The draft report consists of four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 2003 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

Let me now turn to the text of the draft report and draw the attention of delegations to paragraph 8 on page 7, where the amendment proposed by the representative of Indonesia should be inserted, adding "on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement" after "Indonesia"; to paragraph 6 on page 14, to accommodate the amendment proposed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his remark regarding the amendment made earlier made by the representative of the United Kingdom; and to paragraph 5 on page 16, where the amendment proposed by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran should be inserted, adding "the latest version of the Chairman's paper, but was unable to reach consensus on it " after the word "considered".

As is customary, the final report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part comprises the reports of the two Working Groups, which were just adopted by the Commission and which are part of the present draft report. This was the third time that the Commission did not have parallel meetings, and, since the discussions were rather advanced in both Groups, I was privileged to be able to closely watch both Chairmen and delegations working towards crafting a consensus skilfully, painstakingly and step by step on two most complex issues of the modern disarmament agenda.

The reports of the Working Groups, although not perfect or fully satisfactory to everyone, will serve as a good basis for further discussion. The inability to adopt the reports by consensus was due to the complexity of the issues, not to a lack of effort on the part of delegations.

On agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", I can say that it was a welcome occurrence that the dialogue on this complex issue was vigorously pursued within the framework of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission, with its deliberative mandate, allows practical and action-oriented considerations as well as broad philosophical and conceptual approaches to the issue without being under negotiating pressure. From that point of view, all submitted working papers, conference room papers and oral and written comments constitute a rich background against which the Group operated.

Here, I wish to emphasize the valiant efforts of the Chairman of the Working Group. Thanks to his

unfailing belief in the possibility of success and his readiness to act on this conviction, nothing was lost from this repository of ideas.

On agenda item 5, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", a valiant effort was undertaken by the Chairperson during the intersessional period to present the Group with his non-paper right at the start of the session this year. Building on positive elements achieved during the past two years, the new Chairman took the Group down the path of steady progress. For the skilful leadership which he provided to the Working Groups, the Chairman deserves our deep gratitude.

Of course, it is regrettable that, after all this hard work, consensus was not achieved, but the degree of convergence of different positions and approaches to this difficult issue and the flexibility shown by delegations leave us with the hope that agreement is still possible in the nearest future.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that it has been a great honour to serve as the Rapporteur of the Working Group at this session and particularly to work under the able leadership of our Chairman, Ambassador Mario Maiolini. It was a pleasure rich in experience to participate in the work of the Bureau, together with the Vice-Chairmen and the two Chairmen of the Working Groups, who provided effective and expert guidance to the deliberations of the subsidiary bodies.

Finally, allow me to extend my gratitude to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the counsel and support that he provided to the Bureau and member States. Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind assistance. I wish also to thank the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya; the Secretaries of the Working Groups, as well as members of the Disarmament Commission staff assisting the deliberations.

With these brief remarks, I recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report as contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.2.

The Chairman: We shall now consider the draft report of the Commission chapter by chapter.

Since there are no comments on chapter I, "Introduction", paragraphs 1 and 2, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 were adopted.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter II, "Organization and work of the 2003 substantive session", paragraphs 3 to 14, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 3 to 14, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 15 to 27, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 15 to 27, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Since there are no comments on chapter IV, "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 28 to 31, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 28 to 31, as orally amended, were adopted.

The Chairman: Having adopted all paragraphs of the report, the Commission will now take up the draft report as a whole. May I take it that it is the wish of the Commission to adopt the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, contained in document A/CN.10/2003/CRP.2, as orally amended, as a whole?

The draft report, as orally amended, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Mr. Ahipeaud Guebo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Inspired by the Greek fabulist Aesop, Jean de La Fontaine, a seventeenth-century French poet, eloquently affirmed an eternal truth: might makes right.

Let me use that fact as a foundation, and logically build a principle upon it: treatment and medication should be offered to a sick person, not to a healthy one. Weapons must be defined as any instrument that takes life, whether or not its intended purpose is to kill. Weapons confer strategic superiority on those who possess them, to the detriment of those without them. An armed man will become a king and a predator, and in his own neighbourhood will be able to dictate as he wishes. History shows that those with weapons are always prepared to use them whenever they — and they alone — believe that they have no other choice.

However pessimistic that view may appear, my delegation considers it illusory to think that weapons can indefinitely act as deterrents. Weapons ensure victory for their owners and it is easy to see that those who possess weapons will always want to retain strategic superiority. Indeed, what sensible person who has become rich, strong and powerful would want to revert to his or her previous state of poverty and weakness? Only a fool or a masochist would want to become weak or poor again after having acquired strength and power through weaponry.

That is the key problem in international disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament.

In his 1 April statement during the Disarmament Commission's general exchange of views, the representative of India summed up feelings that, to a large degree, my delegation shares:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The end of the cold war provided an opportunity to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons. Instead, we saw that most of the world acquiesced in manoeuvres to perpetuate forever the right of a handful of nations to retain their arsenals. The so-called unequivocal undertakings offered since then have proved to be part of an elaborate exercise in equivocation. The search for unilateral advantage has led to measures that undermine the principle of the irreversibility of committed reductions. There is no move towards the collective renouncing of first use. Instead, there are prospects of the advocacy of pre-emptive use and a move towards developing new types of arsenals justified by new rationales. There is also a tendency to go back on commitments given regarding negative security assurances. The discriminatory non-proliferation regime is displaying cracks caused by its inherent flaws and seems destined to be confronted with threats to its very existence.
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> "These developments, combined with the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, do not bode well for the prospects of early nuclear disarmament." (*A/CN.10/PV.254*)

(*spoke in French*)

For more than half a century the international community has been striving — or we hope it has been striving — to build a more secure world free, especially, of nuclear weapons. But through treaties such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and others, States that are unarmed are repeatedly asked to continue to do without weapons. While the NPT calls upon non-nuclear-weapon States to remain non-nuclear, nuclear-weapon States may continue to possess and even to improve such weapons — which is precisely what they do. Countries that daily face hunger, thirst, disease and illiteracy and that have no time to think even about conventional weapons — countries that do not even possess acquire nuclear technology — are being asked to halt or not to begin nuclear testing. In signing and ratifying those treaties, non-nuclear-weapon States have agreed to do just that, while the States principally concerned refuse to sign and ratify them. The nuclear Powers get very nervous during any debate when anyone so much as mentions nuclear disarmament, as though the mere phrase could actually disarm anyone.

Unfortunately, all the good resolutions adopted within the United Nations — even though weakened by the national positions of individual States — continue not to be respected by non-nuclear States. The need for serious nuclear disarmament is being sacrificed on the altar of the rule of consensus. The idea is to establish confidence-building measures, especially in the field of conventional arms. Although it is true that such measures in the field of conventional arms are important, my delegation considers that they are even more important with respect to weapons that pose a threat to biodiversity and indeed to the entire planet.

But what form can these confidence-building measures take? Non-nuclear-weapon States have addressed issues of nuclear disarmament by signing and ratifying the NPT and the CTBT, by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and by agreeing to recognize the right of innocent passage in international airspace and in international maritime zones adjacent to their coasts; they have thus made their share of sacrifices and have proven their good faith. They have demonstrated their trustworthiness to the other parties.

But non-nuclear-weapon States have not even managed to gain negative security guarantees through an international convention, or to convince the nuclear Powers to commit themselves to non-first use — something which is, on the whole, favourable for the nuclear Powers. My delegation, incidentally, believes that the non-first-use rule — unwillingly proposed by

the non-nuclear-weapon States — is dangerous because it constitutes an incentive for nuclear conflagration. Recent information that certain nuclear Powers have developed nuclear weapons that are small in size or in power is of serious concern to my delegation; this could negate all nuclear disarmament efforts.

It is not peace-loving peoples or States that need to be convinced to promote peace. Non-nuclear-weapon States have demonstrated their good faith and credibility; in the sphere of confidence-building measures, they have for decades been calling for reciprocity for themselves and for the entire planet.

There is no doubt that the attacks in Nairobi and those of 11 September 2001 demand that the dimension of terrorism should henceforth be incorporated into nuclear disarmament. Most specifically, this involves the nuclear Powers. There is always the possibility — even if it be one in a million — that such weapons could fall into the wrong hands. The international community cannot take such a risk.

When it comes to fighting nuclear terrorism, my delegation believes that, here as elsewhere, zero tolerance represents the single, indispensable approach to safeguarding both humanity and biodiversity. Nuclear Powers have a duty to redouble their efforts to achieve total and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Political will is the most important element to that end. Without genuine and resolute political will, disarmament debates will continue to be mere academic exercises. Without genuine political will to engage in serious nuclear disarmament, reports, recommendations and resolutions will be mere dead letters. Without genuine political will, nuclear disarmament will only be a hopeful desire that serves to enshrine global strategic imbalances and to foster nuclear proliferation.

If equivocation, procrastination and delaying tactics continue, it is to be feared that many countries will unfortunately come to believe that nuclear proliferation alone — and, I stress, nuclear proliferation, meaning having all parties on an equal footing — may perhaps make it possible to contemplate serious negotiations towards speedy, total and irreversible nuclear disarmament.

I would like to conclude my statement on a hopeful note. As things are going — in a world in which the Manichaeism is growing stronger — a small effort may serve to make complete nuclear disarmament a reality by the end of the next millennium, once AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, hunger, thirst and the disappearance of the ozone layer have rendered biodiversity a distant memory to the inhabitants of the planet Mars.

The Chairman (*spoke in French*): The representative of Côte d'Ivoire is an excellent speaker not just in the French language, but also in English. We should take greater advantage of his words. I would also like to say that I have listened to what he has said with the greatest respect, for I know that it came from the heart. We need such words in these days, when there is some sterility with regard to ideas and initiatives.

Mr. Alnajar (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Republic of Yemen and of the other countries of the League of Arab States, allow me to convey our gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, for the great effort you have made and for your skilful guidance of the work of the Disarmament Commission. I would also like to thank you for your intensive efforts in overseeing the work of the Commission's two Working Groups. My gratitude also goes to the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Working Groups for their efforts to produce the documents we have just adopted. I would also like to thank the members of the Bureau, the Secretariat and the interpreters, who have facilitated the Commission's work.

Mr. McGinnis (United States of America): My delegation appreciates your many efforts, Mr. Chairman, as well as those of the two extremely able Working Group Chairmen, who, on very short notice, took on two difficult but important issues and led us almost to the point of consensus.

Yet we were not able to overcome the final hurdle. In trying to determine why that goal eluded us, I would offer that the Disarmament Commission needs to do a better job of focusing its work when it begins its next session. In retrospect, the nuclear disarmament topic was too broad. The United States expected that the Disarmament Commission would pick out a few specific ways and means towards nuclear disarmament that might be ripe for attention and that could command consensus, and would analyse those. Instead, we adopted a catch-all approach that introduced so many elements — many controversial — that consensus agreement was not possible.

We also hoped that the Commission would have devoted its attention to the more immediate and urgent threats to international peace and security. As we look to the Commission's next session, that will mean looking forward and addressing the problems that we expect to face in the next five to 10 years. As an example, one item that was brought up during this session may merit more in-depth examination by the Disarmament Commission: preventing States and terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. That could include examining ways to enhance traditional measures — such as diplomacy, arms control, multilateral agreements, threat-reduction assistance and export-control measures — that seek to dissuade or impede proliferating States and terrorist networks, as well as to slow and make more costly their access to sensitive technologies, materials and expertise. Again, that is only one example, but it is something that should be kept in mind for future work by the Disarmament Commission.

Despite the inconclusive outcome, we see some reason for encouragement in the efforts of Working Group I. The bar we set was perhaps too high. We took on a topic that was perhaps too broad, covering many areas of fundamental differences of view. We also started with a paper rooted in very different circumstances — those prior to 11 September 2001. We also lost an opportunity to refocus our work last year. Nevertheless, we made important progress in recent days, at least in terms of our approach. Had we started with a more focused topic and concentrated on areas where there were real prospects for a convergence of views, we might have been successful.

The failure of Working Group II is much more difficult to comprehend. Although at the beginning of this exercise my delegation put forward a number of ideas that we thought would improve the draft document, we could have accepted the draft as it was on the first day. Our impression is that many, if not most, of the other delegations felt the same way. According to our reckoning, not a single one of the contentious points on which the paper foundered was introduced prior to last week. We cannot help but wonder why, if those issues were of such fundamental importance that they prevented consensus on the paper, they were not raised until the final week of a three-year process.

Confidence-building measures are extremely useful in reducing regional tension and helping to prevent conflict. By definition, they benefit everyone. But instead of sending a strong message acknowledging that fact, we have produced nothing. At least one delegation suggested that consensus implies that the favoured topics of every delegation will in some way be accommodated. We believe that that is a formula for failure, as every delegation would thus be encouraged to put forward a laundry list of proposals, many of which would have little chance of gaining support. If such an approach were ever able to produce consensus, it would be on documents that were really not worth reading.

If forums such as the Disarmament Commission are to be productive, delegations need to do some serious reflection on how to approach their work. We believe that the only way in which such a system can work is by maintaining a focus on the subject at hand and by building from the ground up on areas of convergence. My authorities have championed the concept of effective multilateralism, and we in the Disarmament Commission should think hard about how we can ensure that the Commission will be an effective instrument of disarmament policy.

Finally, the outcome in no way reflects on the efforts made by you, Mr. Chairman, or by the Chairmen of the two Working Groups. We believe that all those involved have approached their work with dedication, wisdom and flexibility, and that the Chairmen did everything humanly possible to achieve the success that, alas, eluded us. We would like to thank all those involved.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of the United States for his reflections, which could be useful in helping to create a better environment to improve our dialogue.

Mr. Syed Hasrin (Malaysia): I am speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your guidance and your tireless work in steering the work of this session, as we made a collective effort to fulfil the mandate entrusted to us by the General Assembly. It would also like to thank the other members of the Bureau for their contributions. We commend the Chairmen of Working Group I and Working Group II for their diligence and hard work in steering the work of those Groups. We would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, through you, Sir, to the two previous Chairpersons of the Working

Groups for their contributions in discharging their duties over the past two years.

Members of the Commission might recall that, during the general exchange of views, on 31 March, the Non-Aligned Movement underscored the importance of achieving a successful conclusion to the 2003 session. In that connection, the Non-Aligned Movement regrets that, despite all our efforts, the Commission was unable to agree on a consensus document on the two substantive agenda items, especially item 4.

The Commission might recall that the Non-Aligned Movement has been constructive and has shown great flexibility in the deliberations at this session. We are of the view that, after three years of deliberations, the Commission has come closer to reaching agreement on both agenda items. We would like to stress that the lack of consensus at this session should not be construed as a failure of the Disarmament Commission. Deliberations at this session have shown that, on those two items, member States will require a further exchange of views before all of us can reach consensus.

The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the sole specialized deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues leading to the submission of concrete recommendations on those issues. In that connection, the Non-Aligned Movement will continue to work with other delegations at future sessions of the Disarmament Commission in a spirit of preserving the importance of multilateralism in the area of disarmament.

Lastly, we would also like to pay tribute to the members of the Secretariat for the assistance and cooperation they extended to the members of the Movement.

The Chairman: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his observation that the failure to reach consensus should not be interpreted as a failure of the Disarmament Commission.

Ms. Cedeño Reyes (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, on behalf of my delegation and of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and to thank you for the work that you have done, as well as for your tireless efforts in trying to achieve consensus among delegations so that the useful and specific initiatives and proposals reflected in the working papers of Working Groups I and II will not remain empty words.

We also appreciate the tireless efforts of the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, who so wisely guided the work of those Groups. They made a tremendous effort to achieve the success that we hoped for. We appreciate all the work that they did. Above and beyond the difficulties and obstacles, we believe that, working in a constructive spirit through dialogue and cooperation, we will in future be able to move closer together in significant ways in dealing with these very complicated issues relating to world peace and stability.

Finally, we congratulate the Secretariat on the arduous work that it carried out.

Mr. Seetharam (India): I considered beginning my remarks by recalling the opening statement made by my delegation several days ago. But now I find that I do not have to do so, thanks to my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, in particular, for your valuable leadership and the extremely skilled manner in which you have guided our work. My delegation would also like to compliment the Chairman of the two Working Groups for their dedication, diligence and composure in the face of long odds. Let me also thank the members of the Commission secretariat, the interpreters and the conference services staff for their excellent support.

The outcome of this session of the Disarmament Commission is not what my delegation had hoped for. Taking into account the universal membership of this forum — unlike others — greater flexibility on the part of all delegations would, indeed, have helped us to bridge the small but significant gulf that stood between us and our objective in Working Group I.

We are equally disappointed that consensus could not be achieved in Working Group II, which had before it the modest but very important mandate of presenting practical confidence-building measures of a voluntary nature in the field of conventional arms. We sincerely hope that we will have greater success in the Disarmament Commission in the years to come.

I should like to reaffirm my country's undiminished commitment to global nuclear

disarmament and to the use of practical confidence-building measures whenever and whenever they are feasible and help to advance the cause of peace and security.

The Chairman: Undoubtedly, we must reflect on the results of this session. Perhaps — as is always the case in human experience — what the past promised to give us looks much better to us than the present. But I thank the representative of India, because his words are an encouragement to persevere in our endeavours.

Mr. Andreadis (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the European Union (EU) and of its new partners.

The EU highly appreciates the efforts of the Chairman of the Commission and of the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II to achieve a satisfactory result during the past three weeks. Unfortunately, despite those efforts, the outcome of our meetings was unsatisfactory. On the one hand, it has been recognized that disarmament and non-proliferation issues are critical to achieving peace and prosperity in our world, and efforts should continue to be undertaken multilaterally, regionally and internationally to attain that goal. On the other hand, it has been proved that on a number of issues there is still divergence, which did not allow us to achieve the desired result. We hope that circumstances will enable us to arrive at a more fruitful outcome in the future.

The members of the European Union feel that Ambassador Maiolini, with his beaming personality and his long experience — assisted by the two skilful diplomats who chaired the two Working Groups, Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt and Mr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão of Brazil — contributed much to making the Commission's work run smoothly. We cannot fail to praise their hard work and devotion. If a result was not achieved, it was not their fault. Therefore, I believe I am expressing the common feeling of the House when I commend their talents. Thanks go also to the Secretariat for its tireless work.

The Chairman: I must say that the kind words of friends are the best medicine for the wounds of men.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We agree with the statement made earlier by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, I should like to add some other elements.

The delegation of Cuba deeply regrets that it was not possible to achieve a consensus on the item "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament". For Cuba, nuclear disarmament is the highest priority in the disarmament sphere, and we are much concerned at the obvious lack of political will shown by some States to move forward towards that objective. Our delegation is particularly concerned at some States' opposition even to accepting an elementary principle such as the fact that nuclear disarmament would contribute to strengthening international peace and security.

My country will take due note of what occurred during the proceedings of Working Group I. We emphasize that the lack of consensus on the Chairman's document can in no way be interpreted as diminishing the vital importance that the international community attaches to the achievement of nuclear disarmament and to the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

We cannot fail to take this opportunity to express our sincerest gratitude to the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt, for his tremendous efforts, his diplomatic skill and the professional way in which he carried out his work.

The delegation of Cuba also deeply regrets that it was not possible to reach consensus on the item "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". Our delegation reaffirms the importance of confidence-building measures, whose ultimate purpose is to strengthen international peace and security. Confidence-building measures should contribute to the creation of conditions favourable for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. We reiterate that one of the most important functions of such measures is precisely to reduce the danger of misunderstanding and miscalculation with respect to military activities and to help prevent military confrontation. Confidence-building measures cannot be a substitute or a precondition for disarmament measures and cannot divert attention from them. We understand that confidence-building measures depend ultimately upon specific security conditions and on other interrelated factors that may exist in a particular country, subregion or region.

We should also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Chairman of Working Group II, Mr. Santiago Irazabal Mourão of Brazil, for his constant efforts, his diplomatic skill and

the professional way in which he carried out his difficult work.

Finally, my delegation should like to give special thanks to you, Sir, for the job you have done and for your understanding. We also thank the other members of the Bureau, the representatives of the Secretariat, the translators and Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala for his ongoing support for this Commission's work.

Mr. Durrani (Pakistan): I am taking the floor, first, to align myself with the statement made by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is really indebted to you, Sir, for the guidance and leadership you have provided to this Commission during the past three weeks. The way you conducted and guided our deliberations will be with us in the future and guide us by its example of patience, hard work and the power of persuasion. We are really impressed.

I take this opportunity also to thank the Chairmen of the two Working Groups, my best friends Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt and Mr. Santiago Mourão of Brazil. They are not only friends, but also excellent diplomats with excellent skills in persuading their colleagues as to how to conduct diplomacy. We have also learned a lot regarding flexibility and discovered new meanings of the word.

We may have failed this time, but we will try again. We will not relent, for our common objective lies in total disarmament and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

We were disappointed to see that no consensus could be achieved in Working Group I on the issue of nuclear disarmament, a priority issue for the membership of the United Nations. Unfortunately, a consensus among those who champion the cause of non-proliferation was blocked. This has led my delegation to believe that universal adherence and compliance should in fact be the focus of the States parties in order to protect the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Of course, we cannot be selective on the compliance issue. We hope that we will be working hard towards that end.

We may have failed in sensitizing some member States regarding the destructive impact of sophisticated conventional weapons, but we are confident that they will be convinced one day soon of the destabilizing impact of such weapons on regional and global peace and security, especially in regions simmering with tensions.

We have not lost hope. We will continue to work for the greater consensus. However, we would also oppose attempts to impose the "one size fits all" approach. We would like to have a consensus across the board with total flexibility. I think this is the message that should be sent out from this session of the Disarmament Commission.

The Chairman: I appreciate the representative of Pakistan's kind words to me and the co-Chairmen of the Working Groups, because members know how closely we followed their activities. In a sense, we drank the same coffee and ate the same meals. I am encouraged to hear his words to the effect that we will try again, because they demonstrate at least that we believe in the validity of the institutions in which we work.

Mr. Lew (Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to join previous speakers in praising the dedicated efforts that you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau have made. My delegation would like especially to express its deepest thanks and appreciation for the tireless efforts of the two able Chairmen of Working Groups I and II.

Although we were not able to reach a consensus or to adopt a substantive final outcome, we are of the view that our deliberations throughout the session were serious, sincere and faithful to our mandate. Indeed, our collective efforts were worth trying. We sincerely hope that we will be able to reach a consensus on whatever the discussions may be at the next session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Udedibia (Nigeria): I wish, on behalf of the African Group, to thank you, Sir, for your efforts, which were really very evident, to achieve success at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

The African Group also extends its thanks to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups for their tireless efforts to achieve consensus in those Groups. We also thank the Secretariat for its cooperation towards the successful fulfilment of the mandate of the Disarmament Commission.

The African Group had hoped for concrete results from the work of the Disarmament Commission from the very beginning of this session. The Group is

disappointed, however, that the Commission could not reach a consensus in either of the Working Groups.

Mr. Stritt (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes at the outset to express its thanks for all the efforts made by you, Sir, and by the Chairmen of the two Working Groups over the past three weeks.

My delegation also wishes to express its deep disappointment at the lack of concrete results achieved by the Working Groups. In our view, this lack of results highlights the current crisis of multilateralism in general and of the multilateral disarmament process in particular. My delegation believes nevertheless that multilateralism is the most appropriate way to address most of the issues linked to international peace and security. The Disarmament Commission is certainly one of the most apposite forums for that purpose.

In spite of the flexibility demonstrated by many delegations, however, there were obviously a number of failures of understanding that prevented the Commission from achieving positive results. Switzerland deplores this state of affairs and hopes that all delegations will pursue their ideas and efforts in the Commission's future work so as to achieve concrete results that are satisfactory to all parties.

The Chairman: I am not going to make a political statement. I think that the intentions of the session have already been expressed during the opening statement of the Chairman.

However, I would like to say that the unsatisfactory conclusion of our proceedings should, in the coming days, serve to focus our attention on the reason we were not able to achieve consensus. As the representative of the United States said, we were close to consensus. We made progress, but it was not possible for us to come to a positive conclusion. We should reflect on the statements made here, particularly upon the expressions of regret I myself heard about the missed opportunity. I also noted a willingness to continue to seek results from the Disarmament Commission.

We should ask ourselves why the session ended as it did. I would say it is probably because, despite all the calls to submit papers and put forward proposals during the period from 17 October to 21 March, the responses from the floor were not very, shall we say, active. Some items were probably submitted relatively late. Despite the invitation made at the beginning, we likely were overly ambitious. We should probably focus better on the issues with which we are dealing. We should also attempt to define the perameters within which we must carry out our discussions.

Nothing in life is unuseful, most of all within this context. There is a sincere desire to demonstrate the value of multilateralism, and especially to demonstrate that the United Nations is a vital institution. In that regard, we take our experience home with us. We should concentrate on asking why some things were achieved and others were not possible. We should recall some of the words we spoke during our session in order to understand what must be done to improve our work.

I thank all the members of the Commission. I am grateful for their expressions of solidarity. I would also like to take this opportunity once again to convey my appreciation to delegations for their flexibility and for the good dialogue we always enjoyed. I also wish to thank my two Vice-Chairpersons, who have been absolutely outstanding.

In addition to expressing my gratitude to all delegations, I also convey my thanks to all the members of the Bureau, who have assisted me in shouldering my responsibility for running the Commission smoothly. I am particularly grateful to them. I also wish to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his active interest in the work of the Commission and for the valuable counsel he provided to me, the Bureau and the delegations. I also wish to thank the Secretary of the Commission, the secretaries of the Working Groups, the staff members of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the interpreters, the conference officers and documents officers.

Closure of the session

The Chairman: I declare closed the 2003 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.